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Spies: good, bad and psychotic

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It makes me nervous to think that the Russians know more about American military operations than we Americans do. Considering that we're the ones who pay for it, that seems unfair.

Four Americans, John Walker Jr., his brother Arthur, his son Michael, and Jerry A. Whitworth, are charged with giving secret American military information to the Soviet Union in exchange for money.

Experts say some of the information was very important but they never say what it was. I think that as long as the Russians have it, the Pentagon ought to let the rest of us in on it.

Every time I read about some move the Russians are making, like beefing up their strength in the Mediterranean, I say to myself, "They've got all our secrets. They must know what they're doing."

I've never been able to take spying seriously. Spies hardly ever get any important information and, even when they do, I'm not sure it's necessarily bad for the country they get it about. If everyone in the world knew more about everyone else in the world, it would probably be a better world.

In the first days of Arthur Walker's trial, Pentagon experts said the information Jerry Whitworth gave the Soviets may have compromised the Navy's computer system. This would allow the Russians to decipher messages sent from our Navy ships at sea back to the Defense Department in Washington.

It sounds serious but ... like what? What information could the Russians get that would hurt us and help them? Are we really doing something sneaky that demands total secrecy?

There's a lot of talk about executing John Walker and the others if they're found guilty, but I hope they aren't executed. It would make what they did seem too important. If they did what they're accused of, the Walkers and Whitworth are despicable men. They're the worst kind of spies because they sold out their country. But I don't even think they ought to go to prison. They ought to be turned loose where the rest of us can hiss and boo at them whenever they leave the house.

Maybe they ought to have an "S" for "Spy" branded on their foreheads.

There are different kinds of spies and not all are bad. The good spies are the ones who spy for their own country out of a sense of loyalty.

Moses sent 12 spies into the Land of Canaan to find out more about the people there. Nathan Hale is another in the good-spy category. In 1776 he was a captain in George Washington's army. Washington needed information about the numbers and location of British troops and Nathan Hale volunteered to be a spy.

The Russian best-selling author, Arkady Shevchenko, who was sent here by the Soviet Union as part of its United Nations delegation and ended up selling us information about Russia, is a despicable spy for the same reason John Walker is. He sold out his own country. It benefited us but that doesn't alter the fact that he's a rat of the worst kind.

A lot of spies are rats. Many are psychotic nuts who'd spy on anyone for anybody either for excitement, for money or because they're misfits who can't find their place in society so they try to destroy it.